



Protected Work Experience

An evaluation



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Statement of Intent

Walton Charity wants to use its Community Grant funds to make a lasting impact. The Charity actively welcomes approaches to discuss opportunities to work, and fund, in partnership creative and innovative approaches addressing:

◆◆ Social isolation & a lack of well-being, which can be created by inequalities in our local community

◆◆ New approaches to overcome the lack of affordable housing for local people

The Charity particularly wants to work with, and fund, others to achieve lasting changes in the community by using its community grant making to pump prime initiatives which reduce social and economic disadvantage

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Executive summary

The Protected Work Experience project was led by Elmbridge Youth Support Service and supported by Walton Charity. Its aim was to support disadvantaged young people who were not in employment, education or training (NEET) into work, further education or training through an extended 12 week supported work placement. 14 severely disadvantaged young people went through the scheme, 10 of whom subsequently moved into work or further education.

The young people who took part in the project had a range of severe needs, ranging from major mental health difficulties, including suicidal tendencies and self harming, through criminal behaviour and being victims of sexual abuse. Almost all reported severe lack of self-confidence and self-esteem, communications issues, being very withdrawn and suspicious of their peers and paranoia around public transport.

The project produced evidence that trainees:

- gained in self-confidence, self-esteem and communications skills
- acquired a sense of responsibility
- gained an ability to get to work on time
- gained other vocational skills associated with work placements
- were able to move on and able to leave all support services.

The employers interviewed were extremely positive about the scheme which they clearly found more rewarding than traditional work placements. All were positive about the young people they had worked with and keen to continue if more suitable trainees are identified.

“for the trainees, the scheme has shown something like 70:30 success rate... it provided them with real-life experiences, skills and tools to manage receiving money, organising themselves, managing communications in a work environment... you couldn't get these things on a normal course or work placement.”

Chris Beck, Elmbridge Family Services Team Manager

The project did entail a major injection of resource, both in terms of finance (provided by Walton Charity), organisation (provided by Elmbridge Youth Services team) and time (provided by employers). The scheme cost an average of £770 per young person which in our view represents exceptional – even extraordinary - value for money.

Despite the low numbers engaged, the Protected Work Experience project has shown that a pioneering, innovative approach to getting disadvantaged young people to engage with work or further education and training can be successful even with those suffering from multiple and severe disadvantages. There is clear evidence not only of young people acquiring the 'soft' work related skills often cited by employers as necessary, but of improving mental health conditions, and even radically changed lives.

The methodology used in this project has the potential to be more widely used with this troubled group of young people and it is recommended that further trials and pilots be conducted to confirm the advantages of the approach used in this project.

Introduction

The Protected Work Experience scheme was a project carried out by Elmbridge Youth Support Services (now Elmbridge Family Services) supported by Walton Charity between 2014 and the end of 2017.

Its aim was to support the most vulnerable young people into work, education or training by providing work experiences which were longer, more structured and better rewarded than the traditional route. Each placement was a collaborative project between Elmbridge Youth Services (YSS), the employer¹ and the young person and their family or carers. The policy objective was the reduction of so-called NEETs (Not in Employment, Education or Training) a government priority at the time the project started.

The project ran a pilot phase in May 2014 involving four trainees. As a result of that pilot some changes were made to the structure of the scheme. In the following three years there have been many changes to the national policy priorities and to the structure of support services in Surrey which have made the Protected Work Experience scheme less of a priority. Nonetheless it has continued working with a small but highly vulnerable group of young people until the end of 2017.

This report will aim to set out the background and rationale for the project, to look in some detail at the outcomes and impact of the project on all participants and stakeholders and will make a series of recommendations which would be applicable to any furtherance of this specific scheme but also to any other local authorities or third sector organisations which might wish to examine or pilot this approach.

¹ Although this report refers to 'employers' throughout, we should be clear that the young people on placements were not formally employed. Similarly, although young people received set payments for their time spent on placements, they were not actually paid for their work in the formal sense.

Work experience, placements and mentoring

The provision of work experience for upper secondary school pupils and college students has been a popular intervention for over 40 years. It is largely seen as a way of preparing young people for moving into the world of work, a way for young people to trial certain work sectors or to gain work-related skills and ‘maturity’. In 1973 the “Education (Work Experience) Act” clarified the law to allow pupils to undertake placements on employers’ premises during the last year of compulsory education. This was largely a response to the raising of the school leaving age to 16. By the end of the 1980s, however, there was an assumption that all pupils should have work experience before the age of 16. National guidelines for work experience were first published in 1998 and in 2004 work-related learning became a statutory requirement in Key Stage 4. Work experience has continued to grow in importance in the last decade with innovations such as the Young Apprenticeship and the 14-19 Vocational diplomas² (Mann, 2012).

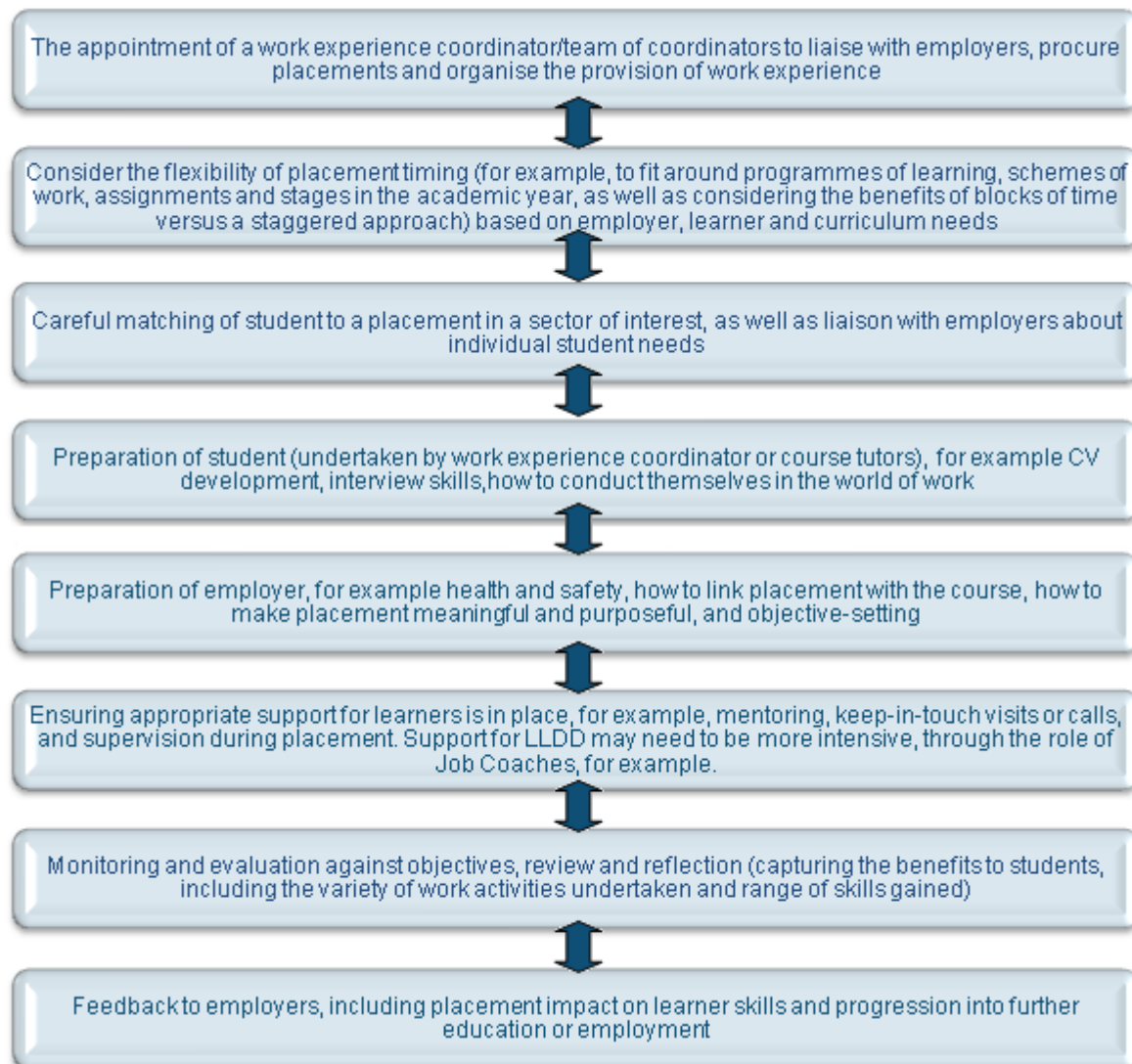
Despite the ubiquity of work experience programmes, there is very little research on their effectiveness in actually delivering on these varied expectations. There is also little rigorous research on what constitutes effective work experience. Reviewing what research literature there is does not suggest common agreement on what might be the most effective length of a work experience placement, what preparation should be required of all parties or what supervision should be in place or what requirements should be asked of the young person.

Most of the available research tends to be limited in nature and often focused on specific interventions. An example is the Department for Education research report “Work experience and related activities in schools and colleges” (DoE, 2017) which identified a range of approaches that were felt to support the delivery of effective work-related activities. These include:

- Availability of schemes
 - work experience should be delivered as part of a structured programme
 - activities should support career decision-making.
- Identification of work experience
 - young people should be actively involved in identifying work placements
 - young people given support to find work placements.
- Preparatory activities
 - young people supported in researching host company
 - employers meeting trainee to understand their needs.
- Employers offering a programme of activities which allow young people to develop their skills and knowledge
- Employers accessing support to set up placements
- Monitoring, evaluation and review
 - employers provide feedback on performance
 - young people reflect on their experience
 - school and college staff should reflect on the effectiveness of their offer.

Similarly, a 2013 DfE evaluation (Simms et al, 2013) suggests the following steps to providing high quality work experience:

² They were a fundamental part of the short-lived Vocational Diploma qualification introduced at the end of the last Labour government. See https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/14%E2%80%9319_Diploma



The Higher Education Careers Services report “The impact of work experience on student outcomes: implications for policy and practice” (McCulloch et al, 2014) similarly recognises the necessity of work experience being high quality, and recommends that all parties should:

- accept and recognise the value to employability
- be partners in planning and management
- clearly understand the responsibilities and expectations of everyone involved
- collaborate to ensure opportunities are inclusive, safe and supported
- engage in structured opportunities for learning and development
- establish sustainable relationships and networks
- record outcomes and evaluate feedback for continuous enhancement.

A UKCES briefing paper “Why businesses should recruit young people” (Hasluck, 2012) confirms the advantages for employers in recruiting more young people, including offering them work experience, while the Birmingham University report “The work experience placements of secondary school students: widening horizons or reproducing social inequality?” (Hatcher & Le Gallais, 2008) makes the point that self selecting of work experience opportunities reinforces existing stereotypes and does not promote social mobility.

It is interesting to note the types of impact on young people which are most often cited and also considered to be the most important impact (DoE, 2017). Many of these we might consider to be interchangeable with the 'soft skills' required for employment.

Table 1: Impacts of work-related activities

	Impact reported
Communication and interpersonal skills	97%
Increased confidence	95%
Better understanding of world of work/ industries	93%
Improved employability	93%
Increased maturity	91%
Team working skills	90%
Increased independence	90%
Enhanced CV	88%
Time management skills	87%
Clearer sense of career aspirations	86%
Greater motivation to engage in education	74%
Understanding of educational/ career pathways	72%
Easier transition from education to work	69%
Improved educational attainment	54%

An element of the Protected Work Experience project is mentoring, which has been another popular intervention over recent years. While defining mentoring, especially in the context of disadvantaged young people remains problematic, there is general agreement that it is, in essence, a trusting and caring relationship which underpins its effectiveness (Roberts, 2000, Pawson, 2004). Once again, however there is little convincing research demonstrating the effectiveness of mentoring or defining effective mentoring practice. Research is too often restricted to illustrating the success or otherwise of the desired outcomes from specific mentoring programmes. These usually rely on reporting by mentors or programme staff, and sometimes on self-reporting by young people, both of which tend to overestimate positive results (Colley, 2006). Colley further suggests that the impact of mentoring is often most effective in support which is not directly related to the specific desired outcome. For instance, mentoring may successfully support family relationships rather than job acquisition. The effect, however is to help the individual to progress.

Perhaps the scheme which is most similar to Protected Work Experience is Supported Internships. From August 2013, all young people in full or part-time education aged 16 to 19 have been expected to follow a study programme – a coherent, personalised learning programme that offers breadth, depth and progression. A supported internship is one type of study programme specifically aimed at young people aged 16 to 24 who have a statement of special educational needs or an EHC plan, who want to move into employment and need extra support to do so (DoE, 2014 revised 2017). However, supported internships do not include payments, either to employers or trainees and must include education or training including maths and English (see Creese et al, 2016 pp28-35).

Rather discouragingly a House of Commons Library briefing paper (Darr, 2015) concludes:

Research from the countries with experience of workfare schemes, particularly the US, UK, Australia and New Zealand, show little evidence that workfare raises the employment prospects of participants. There is also some evidence to suggest that workfare is less effective in getting people into employment when the labour market is weak. However, workfare can, via the motivation or deterrence effect, reduce the number of people claiming benefits.

The lack of high quality research into the effectiveness of such a common intervention seems extraordinary. That some work experience schemes are successful and some mentoring is effective is clear, but objective analysis of how or why this happens is patchy and the overall conclusion reached by the House of Commons paper underwhelming.

However, a way forward is hinted at by Lisa Russell who argues that support for young people seeking employment could be improved by adopting holistic approaches matched more specifically to the needs of the young person and the employer. NEET young people's pathways into work are often not straightforward, and those deemed 'hard to reach' often have few qualifications and lack relevant work experience and the social capital necessary to find creative or relevant work contacts. Many have multiple disadvantages, including difficult family circumstances and severely limited finances (Russell, 2014). The Protected Work Experience scheme recognises these issues and seeks a creative way of helping young people navigate their way on their path to adult work and responsibilities.

Background

The project was led by Elmbridge Youth Support Service (YSS) which works with the most vulnerable in the community and supported by Walton Charity. YSS primarily works with young people aged 16-19 years, but does offer services to younger people depending on their particular circumstances. Walton Charity provided the necessary financial support to ensure employers and trainees were adequately recompensed, as well as maintaining an oversight of the project as a whole.

At the start of the project YSS had a particular focus on young people who are not in employment, education or training (NEET), young people who are within the criminal justice system, young people who are significantly disadvantaged by their family, social and environmental factors, young people who are Homeless and young people with identified Mental Health needs.

At the time of the project Elmbridge Youth Support Service had around 100 vulnerable young people within their caseload at any one time with many of the young people faced with both multiple and a complexity of issues.

The Protected Work Experience project was founded on six principles established through feedback from the young people engaged with the YSS over the previous two years:

- That there was a gap in the local market between traditional work experience placements and current traineeships, apprenticeships or starting positions.
- That work related activity was the preferred developmental opportunity for some young people (rather than formal Education).
- That the opportunity needed to reside in the local community.
- That the employer could receive up to £1000 spread incrementally over the three month period. This incentive was in recognition of the level of support each young person was likely to need within the placement.
- That the capacity for permanent employment would be raised in both the employer and young person during the three month placement.
- That the placement was flexible in the number of hours and where appropriate kept under the threshold for any reduction in claimed benefits. This reflects the precarious nature of some family incomes and the capacity of individual young people.

The specific group of young people targeted for the pilot programme was those trying to manage mental health issues characterised by acute anxiety.

Description of project

The initial phase was a pilot which was designed to test the premise that highly vulnerable young people could thrive and learn within the right work related environment. The pilot was to engage a minimum of four high need young people who were not in a position to access any other opportunities at that time and to engage at least one young person at the very limit of likely success, so that the robustness of the approach could be fully examined.

The initial approach was employer focused, targeting small local businesses that would benefit from both the cash incentive and the extra staffing. A number of small employers expressed interest and young people were then engaged with a view to placing them with the employer. However no young people were actually placed through this process.

The project team believed that there were problems with this approach on both sides, employers being put off by the high needs of the trainees and the young people really wanting placements that built on their own strengths. Young people were also dissatisfied with the minimal expenses they received for their time and wanted a set reimbursement.

As a result of this initial lack of success the pilot scheme restarted with some significant changes. Young people were put at the centre of the search for the placements working with YSS to describe exactly the type of environment within which they could see themselves thriving. The funding package was also changed to give the young person a guaranteed return and the emphasis on entry to the employment market was also lessened to allow the scheme to look at the young person's personal development.

Interestingly employers were very interested to be a part of a developmental opportunity focused on the young person rather than purely focused on their business, although this in part could be attributed to contacting employers more aware of the social issues affecting some young people.

Following these changes the pilot phase was completed successfully with positive outcomes for all four trainees. The scheme then moved on to its main phase with a key objective of moving trainees towards independence. This involves trainees acquiring many 'soft skills', such as being able to get up in the morning, being clean of drugs or alcohol addiction or self-harming, or at least where these risks are manageable. Placements were for 12 weeks, with trainees expected to work between 12 hours and 25 hours a week, and payments made to both employers (up to £1000 for a full 12 weeks) and the trainees themselves.

Project outcomes

The total number of young people who took part in the project was less than envisaged for a number of reasons, with a total of 14 young people involved across the two phases. A summary of their placements is outlined below.

Table 2: Trainee placements

No	Identifier	Placement	Starts	Ends
1	A	Museum	2014	2014
2	B	Hospital	2014	2014
3	C	Video Production	2014	2014
4	D	Café	2014	2014
5	E	Cafe	April 2015	July 2015
6	F	Retirement Village	Sept 2015	Dec 2015
7	G	Café	Oct 2015	Feb 2016
8	H	Florist / cafe	Feb 2016	Feb 2017
9	J	Cattery	March 2016	
10	K	Café	March 2016	July 2016
11	L	Video Production	June 2016	Sept 2016
12	M	Retirement Village	July 2016	Oct 2016
13	N	Café	Oct 2016	Dec 2017
14	P	Café	Nov 2017	

The trainees who participated all had severe disadvantages with many struggling with multiple issues; they were clearly not likely to thrive in the workplace unsupported. Indeed several of the later trainees had severely complex and difficult backgrounds. While there was no formal record of the particular issues for each trainee, we can use the case studies to map out the most significant of these.

Table 3: Trainee backgrounds

Case Study	Mental health issues	Independent travel	Low self-esteem/ confidence	Self harm/suicidal	Low literacy/ numeracy	LAC /not with parents	Criminality/ behavioural	Abusive parent/ carers	CSE/ Child protection	Drugs
1	X			X						X
2	X		X				X		X	
3		X	X							
4										X
5	X			X						
6			X		X					
7	X					X	X			
8	X		X					X		
9		X	X		X					
10	X		X						X	
11	X		X	X			X		X	X
12	X	X		X		X				X
13							X		X	X
14	X		X			X			X	
	9	3	8	4	2	3	4	1	5	5

We can use the case studies to give us an indicator of the success or otherwise of the placements. Analysis shows us that 10 of the trainees completed their placements and in 10 cases employers were satisfied with their work and conduct. In 11 cases there was clear evidence of progression and four progressed into education or training and eight (possibly nine) progressed to employment.

Table 4: Trainee outcomes

Case Study	Trainee Completed	Employer satisfied	Trainee evidenced progress	Progress education /training	Progress work	Notes
1	N		Y		Y	
2	Y	Y	Y		Y	
3	Y	Y	Y	Y		
4	Y	Y	Y		Y	
5	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Following relapse
6	Y	Y	Y		Y	
7	Y	Y	Y		Y	
8	N					
2 nd placement	Y					No follow-up notes
9						Only follow-up to week 2
10	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	
11	Y	Y	Y	Y		But not permanently. Confident of securing employment
12	Y	Y	Y		Y	
13	N	Y	Y		Possibly	
14	N	N				No further follow-up
	10	10	11	4	8 (9)	

We were unable to gain follow-up notes in all cases and, given the difficult nature of this cohort, we cannot be sure that the progress shown above was maintained. Even so, given the starting points of these young people, the progress shown by the group is impressive.

There was no systematic attempt to collect evidence about the skills gained by trainees over the course of their placements, or other positive mental or social progress made. However, picking through the case studies and employer interviews we can see a list of gains which closely resemble the Impacts of work related activity noted in Table 1 above.

Table 5: Improvements noted in case studies

Aspects improved	No of trainees
Confidence	7
Responsibility	4
Sociability	4
Time management	4
Self-esteem	3
Initiative	2
Budgeting	2
Organisation	1

Also mentioned were the acquisition of vocational skills such as baking, graphics and video editing.

Budget

The total expenditure on all 14 trainees was £10,816³, with just under £5,000 of that being paid to the trainees and just over £6,000 to the employers. The total employers' payments are relatively low because not all employers wished to claim all their expenses or in one case could not do so because of their relationship with Surrey County Council. As noted above, trainees were only paid expenses during the pilot phase and this criteria was changed for the main project period.

As can be seen, there is little consistency in the costs associated with each trainee which range from £188 (Case 1) to £1,405 (Case 6). This simply reflects the individualistic nature of each individual young person and the nature of their particular placement. Some trainees did not stay for the whole 12 weeks while others had a number of false starts leading to spending far longer on the project. Because of the issues around using public transport, there was extensive use of taxis for some trainees, particularly in the early stages of their placements.

Table 6: Costs of each placement

		Payments to Young Person	Payments to Employer	Total
Pilot phase (1-4)	A-D	£1,275	£2,000	£3,275
Case 5	E	£188	-	£188
Case 6	F	£ 405	£1,000	£1,405
Case 7	G	£555	-	£555
Case 8	H	£378	£800	£1,178
Case 9	J	£345	£500	£845
Case 10	K	£525	-	£525
Case 11	L	£435	£750	£1,185
Case 12	M	£345	£1,000	£1,345
Case 13	N	£315	-	£315
Case 14	P	-	-	£0
Total		£4,766	£6,050	£10,816

These figures provide an average cost of just over £770 per young person for the project as a whole, but perhaps more realistically an average of £920 for trainees 2 to 9.

³ Note that no expenses have yet been claimed for the final case study.

Employer experience

We interviewed three employers to gain an understanding of the experience from their point of view.

All the employers spoken to were small, local businesses and all reported their support for the scheme and their willingness to continue to be involved. There were many key similarities in these accounts. An interview process (formal or informal), finding trainees who had a real interest in the business, the support offered from YSS were all mentioned. In each case employers' stressed that trainees were involved in 'real' work, not admin or cleaning. Trainees were involved in graphics work, baking cakes and caring for old people. All reported trainees who were initially lacking in self-confidence, reluctant to go on public transport and exhibited poor timekeeping and reported real improvements in all these areas. One refused to call it work experience as a 12 week placement represented learning on the job; he considered traditional work experience of one or two weeks as insufficient time to actually achieve or understand the role. In fact this employer has now stopped taking anyone on short term work experience.

"[The trainees] are working, they are doing a job, so should get paid. It's a good life skill, if you want something you got to work. We are trying to get them away from school where they have had issues – they've not fitted into school, not fitted into College, but they will fit into the world of work."

Employer, Retirement Village

One key feature was the accurate matching of employer to trainee. All employers spoken to appreciated the fact that they had only seen trainees who were preselected to be absolutely right for them. This deep understanding of both young person and employer by the YSS workers was a major factor in setting up a successful placement.

"Creativity is not based on what school you went to and what education you had. Its about your past experiences. So [the trainee] really can add value to our organisation."

Employer, Video Production

Employers felt that the payments to them were reasonable. In one case they contributed towards mandatory courses done by the trainees, while another felt it compensated for the weekly reviews they did. The payments made employers feel that they were being properly rewarded for putting extra into the young people. It may also have legitimised their taking a great interest in their trainees. All had kept contact with their trainees for a time after they left. They also felt it right that the young people were financially rewarded for such a long period of work. Another employer pointed out that in case of a new employee there comes a time when they cross over from costing the company money to contributing. The same

occurred with the placements and the trainees he had worked with all contributed to the company.

There were issues for all the employers. One trainee with poor English and maths skills found the induction materials challenging and made the employer realise they had not been aware of the levels of English required. However, this made the organisation realise how their systems were not easily accessible to all potential applicants and led to changes of approach. One very supportive employer had to ask one trainee to leave as her attendance was too variable, and all found the trainees needed a lot of initial support.

Also striking was the interest in each trainee shown by the employers. All had kept in touch with their trainees for a while, but all were really keen to find out how their trainees had progressed since their last contact. This illustrates that employers did not see this as simply providing a work opportunity but had engaged in a degree of mentoring, albeit in an informal and unstructured way.

Trainee experience

It has not been possible to do follow-up interviews with the young people who took part. However, one trainee has spoken about his work placement in a video. This is a transcript of the relevant passage.

I got a placement with a film unit – and learned a lot there. Not only about the sort of work I want to do now, going into film and media, but also about independence, making my own way to the office, being able to buy my own lunch without freaking out. Even though I was independent, I wasn't in my own area – I could be in London but not in my own area.

Without the work experience I don't think I would have been able to get into the college I am going to in September, which is a massive art college which I have dreamt of for two years. Because I left school early I don't have any GCSEs which I needed for my course.... But because I got such good references I think that's what helped me to get in. Even though it is the course below the one I applied for, it is going to the college, it still progresses on to the course I really wanted to do. I have something to really strive for now, something which has distracted me completely from my past, it has opened up an amazing new door for me.

Before I was in such a state and scared to step outside my own front door, but now I am ready for the world. I know there will be times when it will all go wrong but I will be able to deal with it so much better. I think more people should know about these support services and companies willing to take in difficult kids like me. I wish there was more education like that.

“This one lad who went for the apprenticeship he had no interest in anything like this previously, but he absolutely loved it, he had a real talent for it.”

Employer, Cafe

Conclusions

The Protected Work Experience project has shown that a pioneering, innovative approach to getting disadvantaged young people to engage with work or further education and training can be successful even with those suffering from multiple and severe disadvantages. There is clear evidence not only of young people acquiring the 'soft' work related skills often cited by employers as necessary, but of improving mental health conditions, and even radically changed lives. The employers spoken to were equally enthusiastic about the experience, even when they found themselves working with young people exhibiting very challenging behaviours. It also seems clear that this is a model which could be used extensively to produce positive outcomes from other difficult cohorts.

The young people who have gone through the project had a range of severe needs, ranging from major mental health difficulties, including suicidal tendencies and self harming, through criminal behaviour and being victims of sexual abuse. Almost all reported severe lack of self-confidence and self-esteem, communications issues, being very withdrawn and suspicious of their peers and paranoia around public transport. The challenges represented by these 14 young people are considerable.

The project produced evidence that all trainees gained in self-confidence, self-esteem and communications skills, a sense of responsibility and ability to get to work on time. Beyond these skills, specific work-related skills were also highlighted. In one case the trainees undertook industry related training as part of their induction process even though neither had shown any interest in education. That there is evidence that at least 10 of the 14 trainees (ie 70%) moved onto some form of work or education is extraordinary. Many of these young people are also reported as moving on and being able to leave all support services. This undoubtedly represents a significant success.

The scheme has been an outstanding success for YSS, offering very vulnerable young people opportunities for growth and development that were just not there beforehand. There is nothing comparable currently available and it dovetails nicely into the next level of opportunity available across the county such as mainstream work experience placements, entry level college courses and apprenticeships.

The employers interviewed were extremely positive about the scheme which they clearly found more rewarding than traditional work placements. The amount of effort they put into working with and supporting these young people is exceptional, and many seem to have maintained contact with the young people for longer than YSS. All were positive about the young people they had worked with and keen to continue if more suitable trainees are identified. The only issues raised were either bureaucratic, such as the difficulty of obtaining DBS clearance. Others learned about their own organisations through their involvement in the scheme, understanding that their processes were not aimed at the non-GCSE cohort for instance.

However, this success does involve a major injection of resource. Firstly from YSS, whose role here is crucial. It requires a leader who really knows and understands the young people, their interests, talents and motivations, as well as the needs of employers. This is not just

knowing the nature of the work but the culture of the employer and the type of person who will fit in with them. Employers needed to know there was support available when they needed it, and that support needs to be forthcoming when required. Financial resource is also required, as both employers and the young people were paid for their involvement in the project. Employers themselves invested time, money and concern to the project. A 12 week placement means that employers develop real relationships with their trainees and a concern for their future welfare.

It is beyond the scope of this report to provide any analysis of value for money, but the total cost of this scheme was £10,816, an average of just over £770 per young person. If we look at the more expensive case studies from the main programme we still have an average cost of under £1000 which seems very small compared to the financial gains accruing from the positive outcomes. The savings gained by moving a young person away from support from CAMHS (Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service) for instance is likely to be far greater than the sums involved here. The number of positive outcomes and the reports in the case studies of young people moving on from various forms of support suggest the Protected Work Experience scheme provided exceptional value for money.

An important factor in the scheme was the willingness to accept initial failure. Not every trainee thrived in their first placement, but those running the scheme were prepared to try again. Others had 'successful' placements, gaining skills and building up a good rapport with the employer, but did not subsequently move on to employment or further education. As noted in the research section above (Russell, 2014) those with such challenging needs tend to not make regular, linear progress, but have ups and downs and diversions before being able to cope with the adult world. Recognising and supporting these failures is an important element in the scheme.

The research section above also noted the importance of supporting the whole person rather than focus exclusively on a specific outcome, in this case the young person gaining employment or entering education or training. Although none of the employers interviewed saw their role as mentors, we can confidently say that they exhibited a 'trusting and caring relationship' with their trainees, the basis of a mentoring relationship (see above). Their support for their trainees was not confined to work related issues, but embraced their whole being, travel issues, educational needs, coping with home life and differing types of relationships. In almost all of the case studies trainees were in a better place as people after their placements and more ready to succeed in the future.

There are a number of elements which we can identify as being key to the success of the scheme:

- The project coordinator needs to be able to make a good match between the employer and trainee. This was seen as more an art than a science, since the YSS leader needs to understand both the trainee and the employer. An interview process was seen as important as it gave both sides a chance to see the other and also validated the placement as being a 'job'. There were very few examples of trainees and employers not being well matched.
- Employers were genuinely concerned to provide real work experience, not simply admin, or cleaning or filing. In the café trainees were encouraged to bake, find and even create new recipes. In the retirement village trainees were either actively

involved in caring for residents or working alongside other employees doing maintenance projects. In the video company trainees were able to build creative portfolios of art work. The view from employer's was that traditional short term work experience only allows young people to see the workplace rather than being involved.

- For this reason the 12 weeks was seen as an important factor. It makes the experience for both sides about real work and contributing to the company rather than simply a short visit. Three months is time to make a real contribution to the employer and in at least three cases employers did offer trainees permanent work.
- The payments were seen as an important element, both for employers and trainees. For employers the payments recognised that they were expected to put in the extra time and effort to work with the young people, that it would involve some resource from their point of view. Payment to the trainees was essential to enable them to take up places, but it also made the experience different from school or other training, and recognised the contribution they were making to the employer. If trainees are asked to do real work they should be compensated for it. Receiving a 'wage' also proved beneficial to trainees' self-esteem.
- That the objectives for both the young people and the employers were explicitly agreed at the outset and revisited throughout to ensure both parties are satisfied with the arrangements.

While the cohort for which the scheme is targeted is never going to be large, consisting as it does of those who are not yet capable of independently gaining work experience but who are capable of doing this within the structured support the scheme provides, the lack of numbers going through the project is a major disappointment. Engaging with just 14 people across three years seems a surprisingly low number. One reason for this seems to have been the restructuring and constant change to the Surrey Youth Services and a national change of focus away from NEETs following the raising of the participation age in 2016. At the time of the project's inception YSS was primarily concerned with this group, but their focus has since changed to those with multiple and complex needs. The majority of YSS clients now would not be able to attempt any form of work experience.

The other disappointment was the inconsistent gathering of follow-up data and the limited nature of that data. In several cases we have no real follow-up data on what happened to trainees at the end of their placement. In most cases the follow-up is about the following months whereas it would be interesting to examine their trajectories over a longer timeframe. Interestingly several of the employers interviewed were also interested in knowing how their trainees had fared over the longer term.

Recommendations

Although relevant to a relatively small group of young people, the Protected Work Experience project clearly has much to offer that cohort. While it requires significant resource to fund and administer, and a group of supportive employers covering a range of work activities, the results of this project are outstanding. The first recommendation, therefore, is that:

- Elmbridge Family Services, with continuing support from Walton Charity, should continue the scheme and look to see if there are more young people who would benefit.
- The scheme should be presented to other youth services groups, both within and without Surrey with a view to setting up further schemes.

Further recommendations for any future Protected Work Experience schemes are:

- While recognizing the difficulties of keeping contact with disadvantaged young people, where possible there should be follow-up with trainees after 12 months as well as 6 months.
- The need to recognise that in some specific areas, employers may need further support e.g. gaining DBS clearance.
- Agree a minimal and consistent level of monitoring (attendance, appearance etc.) during placement.
- Support employers sharing their experiences of Protected Work Experience with their peers to increase the pool of participating employers.

Case studies

Case study 1

A was struggling with long term anxiety and depression and had numerous incidents of overdosing and regular self harming. After making progress at YSS programme it was felt she was ready to move on and that the work experience placement was a great opportunity for her. A placement was arranged at a local museum as she was interested in history and photography and the location of the placement was close to where she lived so she could get there independently. A was very motivated by the financial incentive for her expenses and this gave her a sense of pride and achievement that she was earning money.

Unfortunately near the end of her placement, A's mental health deteriorated and she struggled daily to get up, although she did most of the time. This deterioration in health, coupled with the ending of the financial support became too much for A and she stopped attending the placement despite the employer being extremely pleased with her contribution to the organisation and her future ability. Overall, the opportunity gave A an insight into the Museum as a possible career and that she has the skills and capability to succeed. This has given her increased confidence and self-esteem.

A has since moved in to full time employment and attends regularly.

Case study 2

B was 16 years old when she was referred to the YSS having not attended mainstream secondary education since being excluded in year 8. B soon became known to the Police, Mental Health and Children's Services and would go missing with a younger friend and meet unknown men in different parts of London. Her behaviour at home had become more challenging towards her family and began to display obsessive behaviours including self harm. B was very disillusioned by the education system and her self-confidence was very low; she could not make eye contact, would not hold a conversation and did not know what she was good at or indeed what career she might ever like to do. A work placement was found for B at a local hospital and with the additional support of earning £30 per week through the Protected Work Experience pilot, she was able to attend every day. B soon started to enjoy being out of the house, meeting a variety of different people and gaining skills in areas she didn't know she would be good at.

The confidence gained soon meant that she was buying new clothes, having money to go out and socialise with others. B is now having interviews for part time work at the same placement. The employer has had time to see B's skills, her personality and her ability to work in a team.

Case study 3

[Written by employer] I can confirm that C completed a 3 month work placement from Feb 2014 - May 2014. As an organisation we value the opportunities we can offer young people and jumped at the opportunity to support C as he was desperate to further his learning in the creative sector. C's lack of confidence and self-esteem was immediately obvious so we tried to develop his experience around improving his creative talent and nurturing his confidence and self-esteem. During his first 2 weeks with us, C hardly spoke a word, however seemed

to respond positively to being given the choice of music we listened to in the office and learning by regularly completing small tasks. C gradually began communicating with our staff and he very quickly began traveling independently via public transport, answering telephones and offering colleagues & clients drinks. C continued to develop throughout his time with us. He is technically excellent & has the right personality traits (patience, attention to detail, creativity) to go a long way in the industry. Overall C was a pleasure to have in the office.

C was recently accepted into college to study fine Art, the same course that his mentor in our organisation studied.

Case Study 4

D had been on the caseload of Elmbridge YSS since July 2012 throughout which time he had been highly resistant to broader engagement. D was socially isolated citing numerous falling outs with peers and the associated risk of harm from them. Although there was never any real evidence to suggest he was truly at any risk D preferred not to leave the house alone. D's body clock was compromised through all night gaming and cannabis use. He often missed appointments due to being in bed all day. D was continually offered developmental activities both on an individual basis and as part of a small group. The breakthrough came when he took up an engagement activity that included cooking. The praise he received for his excellent efforts transformed his attendance and his attitude. The youth worker responsible quickly utilised this enthusiasm and found a potential work experience placement in a café. D was very popular with customers and staff and was soon making his own way to and from the placement by bus independently. D had his hair cut, bought and wore new clothes and reduced his cannabis use to a small amount at weekends.

By the end of the placement D's father was sufficiently confident in his ability to sustain work within his building company. D is still working and hopes to specialize in carpentry.

Case study 5

E dropped out of college during her first year of 'A' Levels after struggling to cope with the demands of the course. E had become depressed and withdrawn, isolating herself from her friends and family. Her mental health became such that she self-harmed and made five suicide attempts from December to April, the last one resulting in her being hospitalised for her own safety. A multi-agency meeting was held and a plan agreed to fill E's time with purposeful activities and address her mental health needs. When later meeting with E to explore what her aspirations were and how YSS could work towards them, E stated she just wanted to be a normal 17 year old, doing normal things. Following discussions with E it was agreed we would try a protected work placement at a Cafe which would potentially allow her to gain self-confidence and work related skills within a safe environment.

E completed her placement at the café and went on to get a job in a local restaurant and also agreed to return to college. Unfortunately she then took an overdose and was admitted to Hospital. Since then, however, E has had no further relapses and has transitioned successfully back to college. She is working 25 hours a week at a restaurant and enjoying the job and loving earning her own money.

Case study 6

F has dyslexia, low levels of numeracy, literacy and struggles using IT which contributes towards her anxiety and low self-esteem. F dropped out of college after one day as she felt overwhelmed by the number of students, and size of the campus. She then enrolled on a personal development course but, after two months, it became too much for her as she had been absent on a number of occasions and she felt she couldn't catch up and so eventually gave up going completely. These experiences badly affected F's confidence and feelings of self-worth. Her mother struggles financially and is increasingly distressed about F's ability to find employment as she knows F would find it difficult just to get through an interview. F had expressed interest in working in caring for old people and, it was agreed that YSS would set up a protected work placement at a retirement village with the aim for F to gain confidence, become more independent and gain employability skills.

At the end of her placement F accepted paid work as a home help assistant with the bank staff team initially for two days a week with the potential to expand this to full time work. F is very happy at the outcome and is to date retaining her position.

Case study 7

G's mother was killed in a road traffic accident when he was 9 years old and he was then placed into the care of his maternal grandfather. This broke down as there were allegations of abuse towards G and he then moved to his maternal grandmother's home. G has had little contact with his father since his mother died. Problems with the grandmother being able to manage G's behaviour and charges of theft led to G being placed into foster care 18 months before his involvement with the project. G dropped out of a carpentry course after a couple of weeks and had received three separate YRI (Youth Restorative Interventions) for criminal damage and theft leading to concerns regarding G's wellbeing and the effect inactivity was having on him. It was decided to try a Protected Work Experience placement at a Cafe. G expressed interest in baking and said he would be able to make the 20 minute cycle ride to the centre.

Once G started on the placement his wellbeing improved dramatically. He became confident when interacting with adults both as customers and other members of staff and he received three very positive employer feedback reports that covered the length of the placement. Once the placement ended G completed the Food Hygiene Certificate and has taken a job in a local pub. His situation has stabilised and there have been no further incidents of crime.

Case study 8

H has grown up in an unhappy and abusive household. Her parents live in the same house but not as a couple and there is a long history of mental, verbal and occasionally physical abuse in the household. H spends all her time in the bedroom even having her meals there to avoid getting into arguments with the rest of the family. H has a close relationship with her mother, who is a full time carer to her brother, and will not accept support to move out as this would leave her mother on her own. H did not enjoy school and was bullied but went on to study Animal Care at college, but was unable to sustain the early starts and long journey. H suffers from anxiety and depression and is currently on medication awaiting counselling sessions. A protected work placement was set up with a florist with the aim of improving her work related skills and improving her mental health and sense of self worth.

Unfortunately H decided to end her placement after six weeks as she felt it wasn't for her. Staff at the florist were sorry to see her go, but understood and wished her well. Following a review, H expressed her interest in working in IT so another voluntary placement was arranged but unfortunately H left after just one day.

H's mental health was deteriorating and she expressed suicidal thoughts. A mental health assessment was undertaken by YSS specialist staff who diagnosed social anxiety disorder which had the effect of desensitising her from her emotions, probably as a result of the domestic abuse environment she had been exposed to most of her life. Following further changes to her home life and a decline in her mental health, H agreed to try a placement designed to provide broader work based skills rather than a future career, She started another placement at a Café which has proved very effective for other trainees.

[Unfortunately there is no further follow-up report into H's progress]

Case study 9

J had dyslexia which made her unhappy and very self conscious and she was withdrawn from school at age 13. During the four years she was out of education she became increasingly housebound and gradually stopped going out on her own. She did enrol at college but found it overwhelming and the travel too demanding and quickly stopped attending. As she has always loved looking after the family pets, J decided that she would like to begin to look for local work opportunities in animal care. It was suggested that J should take up a Protected Work Experience placement at a cattery close to her home. J is initially helping to prepare food for the cats, assisting staff to look after the cat pens, looking after chickens/rabbits .

Follow up (after two weeks only):

She has attended regularly and punctually and coped well with the tasks she has been asked to do. She has also enjoyed working alongside a student from a local college. She has been well supported by her mum who has said that since she was accepted by the Cattery she has been more independent at home, and has started to go out on short journeys to local shops/relatives by herself. It is planned that J will gradually be able to build up the amount of work and responsibilities she takes on over the next ten weeks.

Case study 10

K is a 16 year old who is on a Child Protection plan who has recently moved to the area to keep her safe from serious Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) activities in her home area. K initially went to college but dropped out after a term, struggling with her mental health. Her mental health further deteriorated over the Christmas period and she was admitted into hospital twice. K then struggled with coping with day to day tasks, and was afraid to be left on her own, which resulted in her mum having to take time off work to look after her. K has low self-esteem from the trauma she has experienced in the past, and has no friends in the local area because of her move. K's fragile mental health means she struggles to go out and socialise with appropriate young people, often relapsing into past risky behaviours. Following conversations with K and her mother it was agreed that YSS would look into protected work placement at a Café with the aim of providing a routine to keep her occupied during the day, and possibly help to improve her mental health and low self-esteem.

Whilst on placement K secured a place at college studying Health & Social Care. K said she is now feeling more confident in herself, and you can see an improvement in her self-esteem. K is also working part time in a local restaurant, taking orders and serving food, using the skills that she gained from the placement in the cafe, and also given her insight in to working with a range of workers and customers. K's mental health continues to be a concern but she is engaging with other services to help with these.

Case study 11

L was attending College doing 'A' Levels in Media, Photography, Film Studies and Performance Studies but dropped out after a term, and there were concerns about her aggressive behaviour in the home, her strained relationship with her mother and possible CSE risks. It later emerged she was unable to participate in college or engage with services, due to the deterioration in her emotional health, self harming behaviour, lack of confidence and increased substance use. However, after some positive changes in her home life L expressed an interest in gaining experience in the media industry as she is interested in making films and TV programmes. A Protected Work Experience placement was arranged with a video production company. It is also hoped that after the placement she will feel able to participate in a Media Production Course.

During the placement L was given different opportunities and responsibilities to learn about the industry. This included carrying out research into film projects the company were working on and using social media as a platform to promote the films. She learnt how to edit and put together films. She also went out on location for different film projects and assisted the crew on set

L received very positive feedback from the employer about her time working with the company and has continued to develop the skills she learnt for future employment. She started a Media course but then left shortly after starting as she decided it was not the right time for her return to education due to her personal circumstances. She also wanted to gain further experience in employment as this is where she excelled in her placement. She is hopeful she will gain employment soon and feels the positive experience she had and the skills she learnt on the protected work placement have given her the ability to achieve this in the future.

Case study 12

M came to YSS as Child in Need having made attempts at taking his own life following an incident with LSD. He had dropped out of college and was fearful of going out, mixing with people and had a phobia about using public transport. M also had issues at home with his mother so lived with his grandparents. M agreed to attend an interview with the Prince's Trust programme but was so traumatised by the experience that he exited his mother's car whilst on the way home and later made an attempt on his life by drinking bleach. This incident highlighted the fragile nature of M's mental health in that he had agreed to something he was not ready for. A Protected Work Experience placement was suggested as a first step which M agreed to. M said his interest was in carpentry but not in the usual construction field of work, more in the workshop speciality woodwork area where he could work individually rather than part of a construction team. Due to M's phobia using public transport and the lack of local opportunities, a broader experience was agreed to give him a taster in a variety of fields. A retirement village was approached and agreed to take him on

in the Facilities and Maintenance Department which would provide experience in a variety of roles: handyman/building maintenance, painting & decorating, landscaping/gardening and the opportunity to assist in any carpentry work they undertake. YSS are supplying a taxi to get him there for 8.00am and his mother has agreed to pick him up at 4pm on her two days off.

M successfully completed his placement and were so impressed that they offered him paid bank staff work at the end of his placement which they planned to then lead onto an apprenticeship. There were some issues around DBS checks and he then received and accepted an offer of a landscaping apprenticeship with a local theme park.

Case study 13

N was originally referred as a Child Protection Case and was not in mainstream schooling. She had a placement at college on a Health and Social course but at the last minute decided it was not for her. Due to boredom and a lack of interests N started using more cannabis this impacted on her relationship with mum which becoming more strained and was coming to the attention of the Police. N agreed to do an interview for a Protected Work Experience placement and agreed this would be a good opportunity. She subsequently started at the Café.

On the first day of the placement at the café N was extremely nervous and was unsure whether she was going to attend, but actually attended every day. Over the coming weeks N's confidence grew, she was engaging well with the manager, other staff and customers alike. Reports from the Cafe Manager stated N was a very efficient worker and followed all instructions confidently without the need to have them repeated. N was able to work independently and produce good quality food. Many of the customers were of an older generation, N was able to engage with them spending a few minutes to chat and ensure the customer was ok, displaying good customer service skills.

During the Christmas period the Cafe is closed and unfortunately N resorted back to previous behaviours and did not return to finish the second part of the placement which started January 2017. N was given a number of chances to return but refused stating it was hard to get back into it having had a break and she would have forgotten everything she had learnt. Although N did not finish the placement she is now considering looking for employment within the care industry as she has found she has a natural flare of talking to people, particularly older people, and taking a genuine interest in them and their needs.

Case study 14

P has a rare genetic disorder (duplications on the X chromosome), as well as coping needs, primarily concerning anxiety. She does not take medication but is waiting to see a counsellor and believes that that would help her. Her family have a history of mental health issues, as well as high learning needs – her three brothers are autistic and attend specialist schools. P is currently waiting for her EHCP to be finalised, so that she can enrol on a 3 year catering course in the Supported Learning department at college, as she aspires to one day enter the catering industry and become a fully-qualified chef. P was emotionally and physically abused by bullies from the ages of 5 to 12 and describes these years as traumatic, causing her to isolate and stay at home from 12 to 14, thus exasperating her existing anxiety. She spoke of

coming close to a nervous breakdown and understands that the bullying impacted her self-esteem greatly and affected how she viewed both herself, as well as the world around her.

Personal issues within the family, as well as dysfunctional family dynamics, meant that P often sought love in the wrong places and this eventually culminated in her being placed in care following the discovery of her relationship with a much older male. As a result P spent a period of time in a Children's Home. As a result of these disruptions she did not attain any GCSEs, although she gained a Performing Arts BTEC Level 1 and Health & Social Care BTEC, also at Level 1.

Although P still suffers from anxiety and will herself assert that she has the propensity to over-think, she engages with professionals, is open to suggestions and has a really positive disposition. P was delighted to be offered a Protected Work Placement is looking forward to starting this work. It means a lot to her that she has been trusted to serve customers and to help run the café and I believe that she will thrive massively in the next 12 weeks.

[No further update available.]

Employer interviews

Carol, Café

April 3rd 2018

Carol's initial involvement was largely because of the café being next door to the Youth team. The café was very happy to take on some young people and in fact the café has taken more young people than any other employer which tells you how satisfied they have been. They always started with an interview process, just to show the young person this was serious, a proper job. Carol was concerned to ensure that they did real work and took responsibility for it, not just left to sweep up or clear tables all day! Carol felt most of the trainees had really thrived in their time at the café.

After the interview trainees were paid £15 a day + lunch for working 10.00 – 14.00. As well as serving the public trainees also did baking and as they became more experienced took more responsibility for the baking side. Placements were 12 weeks and Carol had a weekly chat with the trainees to evaluate progress and filled in a weekly checklist on timekeeping, appearance, attitude etc. She found YSS very helpful and would contact them if there was a problem. The main problem was that some trainees could start taking too much time to supervise. She was not able to accept any subsidy for working on the scheme because of working for SCC.

Only one of the trainees was “unsuccessful”, spending far too much time on her phone and ‘going missing’ at times during the day, but Carol thought even she had gained from the experience of working at the cafe. Most of the other trainees moved on to work or education and one, G, is now an apprentice chef. She is still in touch with some of the trainees and provided a reference for one a few weeks ago (for a job as a care assistant). Another girl, H was so very shy, but she had great talent with cakes. Carol felt all trainees had progressed through the usual issues of timekeeping to take more and greater responsibility for work and being in work. Their progress could largely be seen in the usual soft skills required for work – timekeeping and confidence. However, all gained certain specific skills around baking and the very diverse range of customers meant that the trainees had to learn how to deal with a wide range of disabilities. 12 weeks was a good length for most – long enough to feel safe but not too long to stop progressing. Some flexibility might be useful in some cases. She also felt the initial interview was important in setting the relationship.

Carol had a good experience with nearly all the trainees she took, so felt the Youth Service knew both her requirements and the young person's abilities well. She does think the experience might benefit more young people. There was an amount of form filling, but overall the Youth Service kept this to a minimum. However, once the initial project lead Jo left, the quality of the support became less frequent and it would have been good to see the Youth Service more often. Jo was keen on details such as the checklists, but these did not seem so important in later times. Carol was disappointed at the lack of follow-up. She would have been delighted to do more herself and to work with others to keep track of trainees. She thought the scheme could have had more structure to it.

Matthew, Video production

April 4th 2018

The company were involved from the outset with one of the first pilots, possibly because they were based near Walton Charity at the time. There was slight anxiety before starting, but they felt there was plenty of support available.

Matthew did not really see this as work placement. Most work placements they are asked to do are for very short periods – generally a week or less – with people who do not have real enthusiasm for the industry. This was more like on-the-job training with a set number of hours a week for 12 weeks. Matthew was determined to ensure trainees did real creative work not just admin or other trivial jobs. Matthew did meet the young person first to see if they really wanted to be involved, though he didn't see it as an 'interview'. To be meaningful Matthew feels that young people have to want to work in that industry - that is the key for him. There was no obvious support or visits from Youth Services or Walton charity, but he did know he could pick up the phone if there was an issue. Both their trainees got on with real work as part of the production team.

Matthew felt the trainees had made real gains during their placements. There were the independent living gains – confidence to travel independently, timekeeping and taking responsibility. However they were also able to build a genuine portfolio of creative work while contributing to the organisation in a productive way. One of the trainees was able to use their portfolio to get a place in college which had previously rejected him.

“The portfolio of work [the trainee] developed here they used to get a college place which they had previously been rejected for because of their exam results. We were thrilled with that.”

The paperwork was not at all demanding and largely done by the Youth Service. The compensation payment was integral to the success of the project as it allowed him and colleagues to spend the necessary amount of time with the trainees, so transforming it into training rather than 'experience'. It established the responsibility of the firm towards the trainees just as being paid established their responsibilities.

There were no real negatives with either of their trainees. There is some professional learning to be done – being on time, how to conduct yourself in front of clients and so on – but these are training issues that arise for any new entrant into work. Time demands were similar to having any new starter. Nonetheless, 12 weeks of putting in that extra time does represent a cost for the company, so the financial incentive is important. There is a time when trainee stops just taking and starts contributing – so important that they are also reimbursed for their creative work. It also makes it a job not work experience, not school.

Matthew had few criticisms with the process and did not feel that much needs changing. Finance means the employer provides robust training and produces commitment from the

trainee. They get over 30 requests for work experience a week, and have almost given up providing these opportunities, as they are of little value to either side, certainly not when compared with the opportunities offered by 12 weeks of working together.

Matthew felt it would have been useful to look at value that's added after the placement takes place. It is easy to state what happened, but more difficult to evaluate what was the impact and the value. His company were lucky in that their trainees remained in touch. In fact their first trainee was subsequently interviewed by the organisation. There is an opportunity to continue that relationship beyond the length of placement, and doing a more formal follow-up would have been better.

Martin & Agnes, Retirement Village

April 11th 2018

The retirement village were approached by Walton Charity to be a part of the scheme as they felt the village could offer a range of different work experiences such as administration, care, horticulture etc. The Village felt the scheme would allow them to give some young people an opportunity but they were also keep to help secure their future workforce as they struggle to find staff – largely because of difficulties with transport. This was a good opportunity to reach people early in their career development. They did find the age range of trainees a challenge, as they were younger than their usual employees; the scheme challenged some of their own bureaucratic and administrative processes as the young people did not have standard educational and home backgrounds. Obtaining two written references for instance was difficult.

“[She] had real problems with reading and writing which gave us challenges, looking at ways in which we could help and support her; just giving her policies and procedures to read wasn't working, we had to be more imaginative, as she had such a lot to give.”

They gave both the young people who came to them were given proper interviews and they were both employed as 'bank' or casual workers on standard contracts. At the start both were very shy and lacking in confidence. One, F worked in the support and home help section and the other, E after spending a week in Estates joined the Maintenance section where he subsequently worked. F was particularly challenging as although she was very good and gave a lot of person attention, but she struggled with her literacy and numeracy. The Village recognised that she was contributing a great deal to them, but that they heeded to be more imaginative in finding ways around her literacy issues – they needed to think more 'out of the box' to support her.

They received financial compensation for the placements, which covered the mandatory training both undertook as part of their induction, the cost of providing work clothes and the extra time needed to help them settle in.

There was great progress around the three main issues around self-confidence - with customers, colleagues and supervisors, communications skills, self-esteem, timekeeping and developing adult relationships with customers (older people with personal needs), colleagues and supervisors. All progressed to the point where they continued working at the Village beyond their 12 weeks as regular workers and both were offered permanent jobs – though L took a job at Chessington World of Adventure instead! Although it took time to get the trainees out of ‘school mode’ and into work, Martin & Agnes felt this was fairly normal for their age and experience. Once they developed a pride in what they were doing, issues such as timekeeping disappeared. Clearly the retirement village were not used to working with young people from troubled backgrounds like the two trainees, but equally clearly the experience had opened them up to seeing how much such young people have to offer the organisation.

The main bureaucratic issue was getting DBS for the young people. This was described as a nightmare and any help with this process would have been appreciated. They treated their trainees as any new job applicant. Induction was an important process and if repeated now would have been slightly longer. They had regular visits from Jo, the Youth Team organiser, who they thought was an excellent person to work with. She aimed to call in regularly to see everyone involved. After Jo left the Youth Team were less involved. Having a really good central coordinator who understands the needs of both the employer and the young person is key. The compensation payments were helpful to the organisation, as they covered the cost of the courses completed, work clothing and so on, but it was equally important that the trainees were paid, as this underlined the difference between school and work. Both Martin and Agnes felt that there is scope for more placements like this for young people who are not GCSE minded. They also felt as an organisation that they had learned from their experience and would do better in the future.

Interview with Chris Beck, Family Services Team Manager

Chris got involved with the Protected Work Experience project in October 2015 after it had been started by a predecessor Keir Shiltz. Keir had very good links with employers and he agreed the projections for the amount of engagement which the project was likely to generate. In general the level of take-up has been less than anticipated. Chris was not involved until after the initial trial phase had led to some changes of format.

The nature of Surrey Youth Team is constantly changing. Back in 2014/15 they were strongly focused on NEETs and youth support work. Now they tend to work mainly with those with more complex needs rather than 'simple' NEETs; there are separate teams around the county who deal with NEETs. This is one reason why the numbers going through the project were quite poor. In this new situation many trainees the team deal with have not been ready for work placement. If they are they have probably not been in Chris' team.

The main objectives were to move trainees towards independence. This involves trainees acquiring many 'soft skills', such as being able to get up in the morning, being clean of drugs/alcohol addiction or self-harming, or at least where these risks are manageable. These are young people who would not be able to attend normal college or normal work placements, and need a great deal of support around behaviour, travel managing money and so on.

Chris felt that for trainees, the scheme had shown something like 70:30 success rate. It had provided them with real-life experiences and they had been able to handle those issues. Chris felt it was difficult to judge on employers as there were relatively few employers and most had been involved with few trainees. Some employers had been happy to continue, though one was quite traumatised by the experience! In general Chris felt that it was not too demanding for employers as his team did all the work. He felt that the payments were helpful as they opened doors and recognised that these were young people who needed some level of support. The level of payment is about right.

A very important feature of the project was that trainees were paid. This is not a cohort who would understand the idea of working for free, so payment is a significant factor. The flexibility of the scheme was also a positive. However, finding the right placement for each trainee had been a time consuming aspect. Chris thought the 12 week length of placement was about right for most trainees – though slightly longer or shorter might be better for some. The main negative from his point of view was the time consuming nature of the process, monitoring and the reporting. It was difficult to find the right employer and creating the case studies, while important, was difficult as the trainee had often moved out of their immediate orbit after six months. Chris would prefer the scheme to be administered more like an individual grant with no necessity for follow-up.

The main impact on trainees was the acquisition of soft skills such as self-confidence, self-esteem and purpose, as well as the life skills of time-keeping and travel skills. The payment also confirmed their self-worth.

Chris did not feel that there was a great deal of scope for the project to be much bigger than it already was. This approach is only relevant to a certain fairly small group. He would like to

see more flexibility around the length of placement, and that it be administered as an individual grant. He does not have sufficient resource to undertake follow-up interviews.

Chris feels that the project was highly successful in progressing trainees and providing them with necessary soft skills. The success rate was undoubtedly good given the nature of the cohort. However the project aims were essentially 'change' which was too broad, difficult to monitor and subject to too many variables. The numbers predicted were unrealistic so in many ways the project was not a success.

Chris did not feel it appropriate to interview any of the trainees which his team are still in touch with. He will, however aim to find appropriate contact with the employers involved in the scheme.

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